

Dear Members of Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Carol Williams and I live in Willimantic, Connecticut. I support S.B. 312: An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days.

I am very fortunate to be retired and have a comfortable income. However, now that I have more time I, I have befriended a number of people who work at McDonald's and who do yard work for us. They are such hard-working people but they generally have no access to paid sick time.

I was thrilled when the legislature passed the paid family medical leave bill in 2019 as it will help many of these people. But, as you know, the paid leave program is paid for by the employees themselves. Now it's time for the employers to step up and extend paid sick leave to these hard-working citizens of our State.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that access to paid sick leave is more critical than ever. Paid sick days are critical to essential workers. The majority of domestic and essential workers are women and people of color and are least likely to have access to paid sick days right now as they continue to work on the frontlines of the crisis. Without paid sick days, workers are forced to either go to work sick or not get paid. Not having paid sick leave actually leads to higher medical expense for society because workers without paid sick days are more than twice as likely to seek emergency room care for themselves, a child or a relative because they can't take time away from work during normal business hours to obtain routine care. This leads to higher cost to society since ER cost is the most expensive form of health care.

Paid sick leave is also a critical racial justice issue: workers of color are overrepresented in industries that do not provide paid sick days and are far more likely to lack access to the benefit than white workers. Communities of color have faced the most severe economic and health consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. Inequality in access to paid sick leave only deepens the harm and economic injustice.

S.B. 312 will strengthen Connecticut's existing paid sick leave law. It removes the employer size threshold and job classification list outlined in existing law and requires all employers, regardless of size or industry, to provide up to 40 hours of paid sick leave to their employees per year.

Because of the aforementioned reasons, I strongly support S.B. 312. I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably this year to strengthen Connecticut's paid sick leave law.

Thank you for your time,
Carol J. Williams
Willimantic